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Medicare Consumer Alert!

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has referred nearly 250 cases involving attempts to steal beneficiaries' funds to federal law enforcement officials. Many of the scams to defraud seniors and people with disabilities involve the sale by phone of Medicare cards instead of a prescription drug plans.

As part of the new scam a caller will ask a Medicare beneficiary for their bank account number. They will then use that number to electronically withdraw money from the beneficiary's account. Callers also tell beneficiaries they can provide them with a new Medicare card or prescription drug plan for a fee. These cards and plans are not legitimate. These callers often use the name of fictitious companies, such as **Pharma Corp., National Medical Office, Medicare National Office and National Medicare.**

Anyone on Medicare should know that it is against Medicare's rules to phone a beneficiary and ask for bank account or other personal information, or cash payment, over the phone. No beneficiary should ever provide that kind of information over the phone. Such calls must be placed by beneficiaries themselves. If someone calls asking for personal information, or the call doesn't seem right for some other reason, a beneficiary should hang up and contact Medicare at 1-877-7SAFERX (1-877-772-3379) or call a local law enforcement.

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Tips to Protect Against Medicare Scams

Medicare beneficiaries can take steps to protect themselves by remembering:

- No one can come into your house uninvited.
- No one can ask you for personal information during their marketing activities.
- Always keep all personal information, such as your Medicare number, safe, just as you would a credit card or a bank account number.
- Whenever you have a question or concern about any activity regarding Medicare, call 1-877-772-3379.
- Legitimate Medicare drug plans will not ask for payment over the telephone or the Internet. They must send a bill to the beneficiary for the monthly premium
- Beneficiaries can pay automatically by setting up a monthly withdrawal from their Social Security check. Beneficiaries may also pay by monthly check or set up an automatic withdrawal from a bank account, but beneficiaries must call their plan or respond to a mailed payment request from the plan to do this.